



STAGE

33



STAGE 33

Mijas - Benalmádena

LOCATION

Stage 33 begins at the road linking Mijas, Coín and Alhaurín el Grande, via the Puerto de los Pescadores pass. The **18 km** walk leads along the waymarked local Mijas paths and towards Cerro del Moro summit with aerials at the top. Having passed through a tunnel under the motorway you will come across a park in Calle Luis Cernuda, in the northern part of Benalmádena, where Stage 33 ends.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

The birdlife of Stage 33 is influenced by the high altitude of the major part of the stage and the type of plant formations it covers. These include pine woods and some holm oaks which are gaining more territory.



Little Owl. PHOTO: JLM

As a result, there is a mix of mountain species, woodland birds, and birds characteristic to partially degraded areas (due to past forest fires).

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

This stage also shows effects of the fires which have devastated the Sierra de Mijas. First part of the walk leads through an area with dwarf palm and esparto grass where Crested Lark, Stonechat and Sardinian Warbler are the main feathered characters. However, the different pine formations you will come across during

DID YOU KNOW?

The vegetation of the Sierra de Mijas is characterized by extensive pine forests with very diverse undergrowth. The highly skeletal soils (exceedingly shallow soils, also called orthents or lithosols) are carpeted by bushes of herbs which fill the mountains with colour. The flora includes two very interesting endemic species found in sandy areas created through the decomposition of marble, *Linaria clementei* and *Linaria huteri*, the latter being a local Mijas endemic. TEXT: JSM



Black Wheatear's nest. PHOTO: JLM



Long-eared Owl. PHOTO: JLM

Stage 33 (maritime, stone and Aleppo pines) also hold such birds as Common Wood Pigeon, European Turtle Dove, Pallid and Common Swifts, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, Common Blackbird, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Spotted Flycatcher, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Crested Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Eurasian Jay, Common Chaffinch, Common Linnet, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Serin, Crossbill, and Rock Bunting. Very soon you will be

passing by one of the quarries and here it is relatively easy to see Booted and Short-toed Eagle and Common Kestrel. Other birds of prey present along the stage are Common Buzzard, Eurasian Sparrowhawk and Northern Goshawk, associated with the woodland. The first stone pine wood is becoming more and more valuable as other woods are being consumed by fires at quite a fast pace. In winter, the vegetation supports Meadow Pipit, White Wagtail, European Robin, Song Thrush, Redwing, Dunnock, Blackcap, Common Chiffchaff, and Eurasian Siskin, birds which come from Central and Northern Europe. Similarly to previous stages, the number of species to see at Stage 33 increases significantly during migration passages. Worthy of a mention here are the passerines which settle along the Sierra de Mijas and remain there for a few days at a time.



Common Chaffinch. PHOTO: JLM

These include Black-eared and Northern Wheatear, Common Black-start, Subalpine, Melodious and Western Orphean Warbler and Pied Flycatcher. It is also possible to find the Common Rock Thrush. Moreover, when there is a prevailing westerly wind in August, September and October,

you can see raptors on migration, mainly Booted Eagle and Black Kite, although the assortment of birds could include any of the migrants which use the Strait of Gibraltar to cross over to Africa. Nocturnal birds of prey present at Stage 33 are Barn Owl, Eagle Owl, Tawny Owl, Little Owl and Scops Owl, which, along with the Red-necked Nightjar, add ambient sounds to the walk as soon as the sun goes down. Once you reach the higher altitudes of this stage, Thekla Lark can be added to the previously named species. This is also an area where Blue Rock Thrush appears, around the most prominent rocks and it almost always perches on the small rocks on top of the steepest outcrops. Here you can also find Crag Martin, Black Wheatear, Raven and Rock Bunting. As soon as there are holm oaks around, you are likely to



Juvenile Blue Rock Thrush. PHOTO: JLM



Pied Flycatcher. PHOTO: JLM

see Melodious Warbler, Nuthatch, Short-toed Treecreeper and Blue Tit, which are also present along Stage 33. The highlight of the stage is the last section, the area of Tajo del Quejigal where the high ground allows for generous views and where you can admire the gorge with well-preserved vegetation and the cliffs which hold an outstanding sample of rock-dwelling bird species. Around this area you can see, among other species, the Bonelli's Eagle, Golden Eagle and Peregrine Falcon. Along the final section of Stage 33, similarly to the first section, there are species accustomed to living in human environment, mainly Swifts, Rock Dove, *var. domestica*, Collared Dove, Barn Swallow, Spotless and Common Starling, House Sparrow.

TIMING

Stage 33 harbours interesting species throughout the whole year, however the hottest months are best avoided. Similarly to previous stages of the walk, there is a greater wealth of birds to be seen during migration periods.

NATURAL VALUES

The Sierra de Mijas possesses many natural values despite of having suffered many intrusions caused by humans (mainly the quarries and the stress caused by construction industry). The sierra holds the Spanish Ibex and a large quantity of mammals including Fox, Badger, Genet, Stone Marten, Weasel, Wildcat and Egyptian Mongoose.



Female Sparrowhawk. PHOTO: JLM

Additionally, it is worth highlighting the presence of interesting populations of bats, for example the Greater Horseshoe Bat, Lesser Horseshoe Bat,

Geoffroy's Bat and the Common Bent-wing Bat. Amphibians, found close to water, include Fire Salamander and Spanish Painted Frog. ●

Black Wheatears. PHOTO: JLM

